



3 NUTRITION SERVICES

Effective: 12/1/95

3.1 Nutrition Services Planning and Evaluation: Goals of Nutrition Services

POLICY: The Wisconsin WIC Program nutrition services goals are those established by the Federal WIC Regulations and the National Association of WIC Directors. Local WIC projects must also base nutrition services on these goals.

BACKGROUND:

The goals in the Federal WIC Regulations are:

“Nutrition education shall be designed to achieve the following two broad goals:

1. Stress the relationship between proper nutrition and good health with special emphasis on the nutritional needs of pregnant, postpartum, and breastfeeding women, infants, and children under five years of age, and raise awareness about the dangers of using drugs and other harmful substances during pregnancy and while breastfeeding.
2. Assist the individual who is at nutritional risk in achieving a positive change in food habits, resulting in improved nutritional status and in the prevention of nutrition-related problems through optimal use of the supplemental foods and other nutritious foods. This is to be taught in the context of the ethnic, cultural and geographic preferences of the participants and with consideration for educational and environmental limitations experienced by the participants.”

The National Association of WIC Directors, through the Nutrition Section, further elaborated on the goals of nutrition services in the WIC Program. Goals to promote excellence in WIC nutrition services were identified in "Ensuring the Quality of Nutrition Services in the WIC Program (January, 1988), a document developed by the ad hoc WIC Nutrition Services Committee of the National Association of WIC Directors. These goals and adapted narrative are:

Goal #1: To ensure the provision of quality nutrition services to WIC participants by qualified staff.

Nutrition services in the WIC Program begin with an initial assessment of the participant to determine his/her nutritional risk condition, whether a referral to another health care service is necessary, the appropriate food package prescription, and the most appropriate nutrition education experience for the participant. The determination as to whether further nutrition education experiences will be provided in a group or individual setting is based primarily on a participant's needs, interests, and willingness to participate, and also



on the availability of staff, staff time, and space. The most appropriate type of nutrition education contact for the high risk participant is an individual contact. Contacts with lower risk participants may be on an individual basis and in small groups. Nutrition services should be provided by trained WIC staff persons or health care providers who have good rapport with the participants. The following are indicators of quality nutrition services.

Nutrition assessment:

- ◆ accurate nutrition assessment procedures, including use of properly maintained equipment
- ◆ correct interpretation of nutrition assessment information and identification of risk factors
- ◆ identification of high risk WIC participants

Nutrition education:

- ◆ counseling at the certification visit based on participants' identified and prioritized needs
- ◆ nutrition counseling based on current research and practice
- ◆ effective individual counseling skills
- ◆ use of nutrition education materials which are appropriate for the individual WIC participant
- ◆ planned secondary nutrition services (individual and group), conducted in appropriate educational environment
- ◆ participants scheduled for appropriate secondary nutrition education
- ◆ established referral procedures for health/nutrition care and related services:
 - ◆ within project (e.g., from non-RD CPA to Project RD)
 - ◆ within agency (e.g., from CPA to public health nurse)
 - ◆ to other community resources (e.g., to other health and social services providers)
- ◆ follow-up on no-shows for secondary nutrition education
- ◆ documentation of nutrition education
- ◆ positive nutrition-related health outcomes

Nutrition workplans:

- ◆ annual workplans based on needs assessment

WIC Project Nutritionist qualifications and roles

- ◆ Project RD plans, implements/delegates, and evaluates the nutrition component of the WIC project

Food package issuance:

- ◆ food packages issued to participants based on needs and preferences



Goal #2: To increase the participant's ability to understand and meet his/her nutritional needs during and after program participation.

The Federal WIC Regulations define the two broad goals of nutrition education in the WIC Program:

1. Stress the relationship between proper nutrition and good health with special emphasis on the nutritional needs of pregnant, postpartum, and breastfeeding women, infants, and children under five years of age.
2. Assist the individual who is at nutritional risk in achieving a positive change in food habits, resulting in improved nutritional status and in the prevention of nutrition-related problems through optimal use of the supplemental foods and other nutritious foods.

It is recognized that participants eventually "graduate" from or leave the WIC Program; that the major chronic diseases are strongly linked to nutrition habits; that the incidence of many of these nutrition-related diseases is particularly high among the socioeconomic groups that WIC serves; that six of the ten leading causes of death in the United States have been linked to diet; and that to maintain good health over the long term, participants need to be armed with good nutritional skills.

Therefore, in addition to counseling/education targeting risk factors specific to pregnant and breastfeeding women, postpartum teens, infants, and young children, the local WIC nutritionist may offer nutrition education which assists WIC participants towards achieving a health-promoting diet throughout the life cycle (e.g., decreasing sugar, salt, and fat in the diet; menu planning and economical food purchasing, etc.). The information may be family-centered rather than just for the participant receiving the services.

Goal #3: To strengthen integration, collaboration, and coordination efforts with other appropriate health care providers.

The WIC Program functions as an adjunct to health care and helps ensure that participants have access to related health and social services. Accessibility to pediatric and obstetric health care is essential during the critical periods of growth and development. There should be integration and cooperation among the WIC Program, Maternal and Child Health (MCH) services, the Family Planning Program, HealthCheck, primary health care providers, and other programs that serve mothers and children.

WIC is also viewed as a gateway to other services through its referrals to community programs, such as Food Stamps, AFDC, and Medicaid. Collaboration and integration of resources between the WIC Program and health and social service agencies eliminates unnecessary duplication of services and resources, contributes to an increase in service



availability and accessibility, and strengthens the effectiveness of the health and nutrition concepts that the participants are learning in the various programs. Since no one human service program exists by itself, the impact of the WIC Program on health status depends on an integrated and coordinated approach.

Goal #4: To emphasize the health promotion and disease prevention aspects of the WIC Program.

Like many other public health efforts, the WIC Program includes health promotion and disease prevention as one of its objectives. WIC Program legislation states that the Program shall serve as an adjunct to good health care in order to improve the health status of participants and to prevent the occurrence of health problems. Research shows that intervention programs such as WIC are cost effective in meeting the needs of low income, at risk populations.

To better emphasize the preventive aspects of the WIC Program, the nutrition and health education services component should encourage and expand health promotion and disease prevention activities for all participants. Promoting Health/Preventing Disease: Objectives for the Nation includes numerous objectives which apply directly to the WIC target population: breastfeeding promotion, reduction in the incidence of low birth weight, reduction of iron deficiency, improved health status through nutrition intervention, smoking cessation during pregnancy, and avoidance of drug and alcohol abuse during pregnancy. The WIC Program should work with other programs in the community towards achieving these objectives.

PROCEDURE: See the following policies in this section of the Operations Manual.